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Pentagon: No way to end spying

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WASHINGTON — The Pentagon warned Congress yesterday that "the ultimate reality" is that there is no way to halt spying, even though the Defense Department is trying to cut down on the amount of classified material and the number of people who can see it.

In the wake of the current Navy spy case, the Pentagon is scrutinizing its security procedures, said L. Britt Snider, director of the Defense Department's counterintelligence office.

But even changes and "a great expansion of resources at every level of the U.S. counterintelligence and security structure" won't stop the problem, he told the House Government Operations information and justice subcommittee.

"We must face the ultimate reality that no matter what we do there will be other espionage cases in the years to come," Snider warned, "perhaps not as many, perhaps not as serious, hopefully not as drawn out as those which have recently come to light, but there will be other cases."

As the panel opened its hearing, Arthur J. Walker, older brother of the alleged mastermind of the alleged spy ring, John A. Walker Jr., was indicted in Norfolk, Va., on seven counts of espionage.

Also charged are John Walker; his son, Michael, a Navy seaman, and a friend, Jerry A. Whitworth of Davis, Calif., a retired Navy radioman.

The panel's hearing was part of a congressional effort in the wake of the Walker case to review security procedures.

Snider outlined the overall problem by saying that 4.3 million people have security clearances of one type or another, including 2.9 million who work directly for the government and 1.4 million who work for 14,000 military contracting firms.

An estimated 16 million documents are created or handled every year, Snider said.

He noted that since the Walker case broke a month ago, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger has ordered security procedures reviewed and directed that the number of people with access to secret material be reduced.

Although cutting down on the numbers of clearances and documents will help, Snider said, a major problem is that many of the recent espionage cases involve U.S. citizens who approached the Soviets, rather than being recruited.

He said the Pentagon, with congressional approval, is now testing a program using lie detectors to check people with classified access. A number of congressmen have called for increased use of polygraphs as part of the clearance program.

Snider said recent technological improvements in U.S. military programs are attractive targets for the Soviets, who are less advanced technologically than the United States.

Phillip A. Parker, deputy assistant director of the FBI's intelligence division, agreed with Snider.

"In the past 10 years, hostile intelligence services have become increasingly active," said Parker. "We believe this stepped-up activity is due to the virtual explosion of technological advances in the scientific community, the defense establishment and the private sector."

The FBI has responsibility in the United States for blocking Soviet espionage efforts.